



## Analyzing Difficulties in Family Life of Women with symptoms Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD): A Qualitative Research

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### Analyzing Difficulties in Family Life of Women with symptoms Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD): A Qualitative Research

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#### Abstract

The lives of women with symptoms obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD) are accompanied with some difficulties. The aim of the present study is to investigate and identify those difficulties in their family lives. The main approach of this research is qualitative in terms of its methodology, and the data analysis method is based the thematic analysis technique. The process of collecting data was founded on 15 semi-structured interviews with women with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. Sampling was conducted via the purposive sampling method and continued until data saturation. Data analysis was conducted concurrently with collecting the data. Data analysis resulted into the extraction of five themes: Growth traumas, Interpersonal difficulties, Parenting difficulties, Relationship of difficulties with others, Marital difficulties. The results indicated that traits of personality of women with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder is one of the intrapersonal variables which has a determining effect on individuals' overt behaviors and their interpersonal relations is among family relations and their family lives are exposed to difficulties. To reduce this effect, these difficulties require consultative and psychological interventions.

**Keywords:** family difficulties, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, women with symptoms obsessive – compulsive personality disorder.



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## **Introduction**

Family is the most important social institution with profound effects on human developmental aspects. A member of a family receives emotional, economic, and psychological supports and can cope with his/her problems with the help of other family members. Scientific research shows that family relationships have significant roles in development of psychopathy (Singh, Singh, & Kiran, 2014). Conflicts in all close relations is an inevitable issue (Curran, Ogolsky, Hazen, & Bosch, 2011); (Storaasli & Markman, 1990) as cited (Hamilton, 2013), and family is not an exception. But if this problem is not appropriately identified and managed, it may lead to dissatisfaction and mental health problems such as depression, anger, anxiety, and other difficulties (Dildar, Sitwat, & Yasin, 2013).

The concept of family difficulties refers to the overt behavioral, personal, emotional, cognitive, and psychological family performance disorders. Different factors lead to the occurrence of family difficulties, one of which is personality disorder. Different studies conducted on personality disorder indicate that the important and common problem in all personality disorders is inability in making relations especially close and intimate relations. Symptoms of personality disorder is seriously related to marital conflicts (South, Turkheimer, & Oltmanns, 2008).

Personality disorder refer to a set of mental disorders whose main traits is inflexible behaviors. Those behaviors damage individuals because they prevent their compatibility with life requirements (Association, 2013). One of the personality disorders is obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. The prevalence of this disorder among outpatients ranges from 8% to 9% and among the public ranges from 2% to 8% (Cain, Ansell, Simpson, & Pinto, 2015). The main dimension of this disorder needs self-control and control of the environment (Coutinho, Goncalves, Soares, Marques, & Sampaio, 2016).

Individuals suffering from this disorder are identified with traits such as too much need to perfectionism, orderliness, control, doing things “the right way”. They have 8 personality traits including perfectionism, rigidity, preoccupation with details, excessive devotion to work, over-conscientiousness and inflexibility regarding morals and values, miserliness, inability to discard useless personal items (hoarding), and inability to delegate tasks (Wetterneck et al., 2011), Moreover, those individuals face problems in their decision-making and usually require a lot of



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time for making decisions (Desnoyers & Arpin-Cribbie, 2015). Their obsession to rules, details, lists, orders, organization, and schedules is so much that the main part of activities are lost. They are very much conscientious, cautious, careful, and inflexible in facing ideological and moral issues. They sacrifice themselves for work and spend their time for doing work so much that they lose time for activities such as recreations and friendly relationships (without financial needs) (de Reus & Emmelkamp, 2012).

These individuals are in relation with two aspects of neuroticism; firstly, they have negative correlations with impulsivity which is the main traits of constraints and control of their emotions, and secondly they have positive correlations with anxiety. Openness to Experience of these individuals' is very low (Hertler, 2015), and have negative relationship with thrill-seeking (Lynam & Widiger, 2001). They are very rigid in so much that they have no social compatibility. Undoubtedly, they resist against the invasion of new ideas; thus they are very close to new experiences (Hertler, 2015). In addition, they do not enjoy the ability to face failures (Montazeri, Neshatdoost, Abedi, & Abedi, 2014). They are stingy in such a way that they refuse to pay for themselves and others. They save their money for unexpected future. They are very stubborn (de Reus & Emmelkamp, 2012). Personality disorders damage individuals' performance in interpersonal relationships (Wilson & Durbin, 2012). It is expected that they may have problems in their interpersonal relationship because they have too many demands from their friends, spouses, and children. Individuals with obsessive personality are mostly angry at those who do not fulfill their demands. Not fulfilling their needs causes the outbursts of anger and aggression (Montazeri et al., 2014). their clinical symptoms can lead to disorders in their social, professional, and family performances. Regarding the rigidity of these patients, they are unable to make and keep intimate relationships. These symptoms disturb individuals' wellbeing (Pinto, Steinglass, Greene, Weber, & Simpson, 2014); therefore, personality disorder is one of the important factors in damaging family lives. When women with symptoms of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, as a family member, cannot make intimate relationships and express their emotions and feelings, their marital satisfaction reduces and their family relationships are disturbed. Thus, the present study is to analyze difficulties in the family lives of



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women with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder in order to extend the research scopes in this regard by explore difficulties and investigate them.

**Materials and methods**

The present study employs a qualitative research and the thematic analysis method. It tries to reduce qualitative data and classify them in order to understand their meanings because qualitative research is the most appropriate way for exploring and revealing issues in individuals' relationships and quality of life particularly in their marriage and marital relationships (Manaf, Razak, Harries, & Clare, 2011). In the present research, the purposive sampling method was used for selecting participants using clinical interviews for diagnosing obsessive personality of the participants. Then, their selection continued until data saturation by identifying their demographic diversity and traits in terms of age (ranging from 25 to 40 years), gender (female), duration of marriage (1-14 years), education (with at least a diploma degree), and main reasons of referring to counseling centers (their desire to divorce, marital dissatisfaction, obsession, and depression). The process of data collection consisted of 15 interviews with women suffering from obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. Participants were selected with regard to the maximum of diversity of data until data saturation. Semi-structured and face-to-face interviews were used for data collection. Each interview lasted up to 90 minutes' dependent on its condition.

Interviews included some general questions as the interview guides and primary framework for starting interviews. Those questions were developed and extended during interviews. Questions of the interview guide were designed in several fields (but participants did not have any restriction in answering the questions and were free to talk about what they thought to be related to their problems). Regarding different groups of interviewees, questions were asked differently about the same fields of family life. Some instances are as follows:

Please talk about your marital relations.

If you want to tell the story of your marital life, how would be this story?

How are your relationships with the family of your husband?

What effects do those relationships have on your marital life?



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After clarification of reasons for conducting the research and explanation about the aim of using voice-recorders, participants were assured of the confidentiality of personal information; thus interviews were conducted with their satisfaction. Data analysis was conducted via the thematic analysis technique in such a way that firstly the recorded interviews were transcribed and reviewed. Then, the propositions were categorized.

After that, categories were severally reviewed and analyzed to be categorized based on thematic and semantic similarities. Efforts were exerted that the most homogeneity within classes and the most heterogeneity among classes could be observed. Categorization was conducted by attributing separate codes and reviewing and merging similar codes until themes appeared (Burns & Grove, 2010). Some changes were made in contents and name of categories, which should reflect the content. The new data were compared concurrently with all data in order that the optimal centrality can appear among the data. Goba's method was employed for validation of findings and investigation of the validity of coding. Goba's method originates from four axes of real values, applicability, continuity, and reality-basedness (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007).

In the present study, to ensure the real value or the correctness of obtained codes and themes, the extracted categories and propositions were investigated and confirmed by supervisors. To ensure their applicability and investigate the stability of propositions, the researchers interviewed with three new resources, the results were repeated; thus new findings were not obtained. Similar questions in different forms were presented for participants in case of stability and continuity. They offered consistent and non-conflicting answers to questions. Given that in different validation stages of the research, new findings were not obtained, it can be claimed that the results obtained from coding are significantly valid. The present study enjoys the code of ethics from University of Isfahan. To keep morality, nicknames were used instead of real names in the study. In case that participants might be identified, they were removed from the study.

### **Findings**

After conducting interviews for checking their contents in the microanalysis level and extracting the basic concepts and conceptual ordering the open coding method (first and second levels), sub-categories and themes were used. The results showed that the process is in five themes, including the developmental difficulties, interpersonal difficulties, communication with husband



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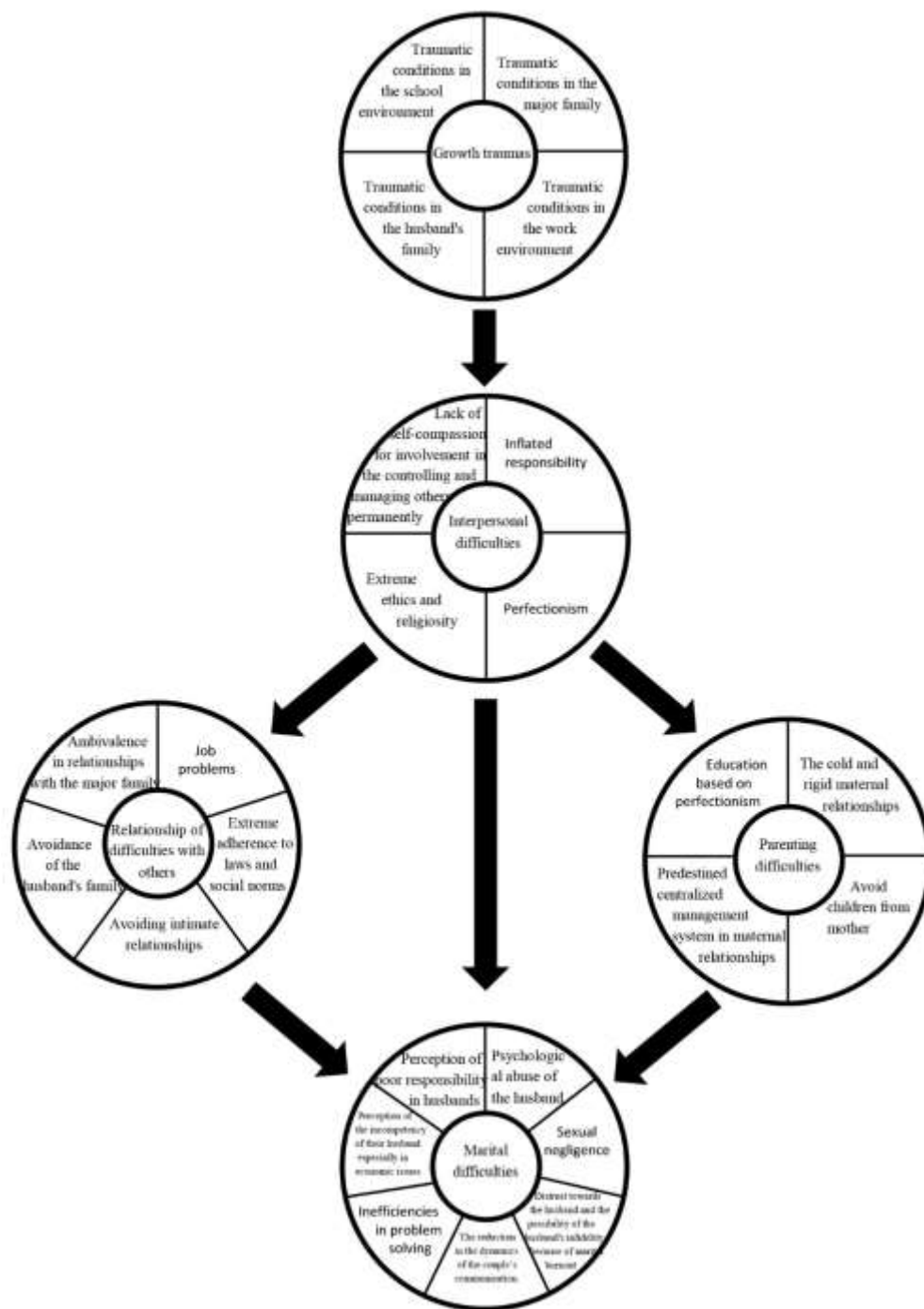
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difficulties, communication with children difficulties, and communication with others  
difficulties, which are presented in the following figure:



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The model of family difficulties of women with symptoms of obsessive personality



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## **1. Growth traumas**

In this theme, we reach the traumatic conditions in the origin family, traumatic conditions in the school environment, and traumatic conditions in the husband's family and traumatic conditions in the work environment.

### **- Traumatic conditions in the major family**

The interviews showed that in most cases one of the parents or both of them had the compulsive personalities or disorders and this problem caused the particular training methods. For example, a mother with compulsive character has its own strict mental frameworks and is very committed to them. As a result, she wants her children to act based on those frameworks. So, she will be a very tough and strict mother. If children do not respect her principles, they are severely reprimanded and forced to observe the laws and rules imposed by their mother. Shahla stated,

*"My mother was a strict woman, especially with me as I was the first child. She was very sensitive. For example, if my grade was other than 20, she would not have me in the house."*

This strict training method enhances the schema of the disorder in children and makes them have strict laws and frameworks in their mind. In addition, they have extremely high expectations of their children and this creates and reinforces stereotypes perfectionism in children and causing the children to have perfectionist expectations of themselves and others. Lili stated,

*"my parents always expected me to be the best, most polite, and most clever and this is engraved in my mind. That is why I've always considered myself the same things and if it is impossible, I blame myself."* Another problem is the distrust of these characters to others. They recommend children based on this view and this enhances the distrust schema in children, which is one of the growth factors of obsessive personality. zahra stated,

*"I remember my father always told me that get information from others but never give them information. The people are not reliable. Be careful not to get close to them very much."*

### **- Traumatic conditions in the school environment**





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A part from the major family, the school environment also plays an important role in causing certain disorders in people. For example, schools with a strict environment and inflexible rules and punish the individuals, ostracize and force them to obey the rules, they thus cause traumatic schemas in them. In this connection, Firoozeh stated,

*"When I was at primary school, we had a strict teacher. I remember when I had a bad handwriting for my assignments, she tore up my papers and put a pencil between my fingers. This had caused fear in me and I repeated writing and deleting so as to make my handwriting pleasing to her."*

When teachers expect their students beyond their ability, Firoozeh thus explained,

*"I remember we had a schoolmaster who used to come every morning to us and tell. you deserve the best, you should never be satisfied with what you are otherwise you rot like a swamp. I tried all my life not to miss anything and always did my best, but I never reached what I yearned for and now I am unsatisfied."*

- Traumatic conditions in the husband's family

In addition, if the husband's family is perfectionist people with strict frameworks then they strengthen these schemas. Setareh stated, *"my husband's family is very demanding. I remember when I took my master degree, my mother-in-law said that these degrees are useless you have to be a scientist like Avicenna."* The expectations of a husband's family also raise the symptoms of obsessiveness in women. As Roya said, *"My husband's family is from Sharifat. Whenever I want them to come over, I have to make several models of desserts and foods. Everything must be perfect thus to please them."*

-Traumatic conditions in the work environment

If the work environment be like this, then it promotes the growth and strengthens these schemes. For example, a boss or those colleagues who are very perfectionist, careful and strict. Lili stated, *"The first time I had gone to work, I have a very strict boss. I always try to do best so he cannot fuss me."* When a person is constantly trying to do things perfect, he/she would experience perfectionism and anxiety and frustration. As Ava stated,



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*"I've always wanted to work perfectly in a way that nobody could find any mistake in my job and this made me anxious. Most of the times there was something with my work and this just got on my nerve."*

In general, it was found that if family and environment are strict and formal with inflexible rules, then they provide the growth areas of obsessive character, reinforce it, and create this disorder in person.

## **2. Interpersonal difficulties**

Women with obsessive-compulsive personality are damaged in their personality because of underlying difficulties in their different periods of their lives, including extreme accountability and perfectionism, moral and religious extremism, and lack of compassion as they are engaged in permanent monitoring of the others.

### **- Inflated responsibility**

These people feel extreme sense of responsibility in their duties and even others' duties. They do not believe in others' works and think that nobody can do a job better than them. Hence, they do the majority of the works themselves. Sahar stated,

*"I have to do all the works; I do not accept the others' works. They interfere extremely in things that belong to others." They also interfere in others' works a lot. Zahra stated, "If there is a problem or discussion, I commit myself to solve it. My husband tells me that you are intruder in the family and neighborhood."*

### **-Perfectionism**

Another characteristic of these people is perfectionism in different issues. For example, they expect themselves and others to be the best. They want to have the best sense of spiritual worship or want to use the best words when talking with others and expect others to treat them in the same way. In this regard, Roya said,

*"manner is a very important factor for me. They should watch their tongues when talking to me so that I have an interest to talk to them. I am very stressful when talking with others because I want to talk appropriately and do my best to be polite. That's why I am reluctant to talk to others. My husband gets very upset about it he says that I cannot talk because I have the least relationship with others."*



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They expect themselves to be the best mother and best wife and expect their children and husband to be the best. These expectations cause problems in marital relationship because these are not satisfied and cause the depression and hopelessness of woman in the marital life. In this case, Shahla stated,

*“I am always wishing. Nothing satisfies me. My husband tells me that why I say everything is not bad, it’s better to say everything is good sometimes. I say I do not tell lies.”*

In this case, parvin stated, *“I always have a lot of goals and I never reach any of them. My friends work a lot and reach their goals and what they want. But I have not reached anywhere. I feel exhausted. I feel I have a problem that I cannot fulfill my desires. I feel depressed most of the times and am not in the mood for doing things.”*

**-Extreme ethics and religiosity**

These women are very sensitive towards religion and ethics. They emphasize on religious practices. For example, they pay extreme attention to prayers times and force others to do so.

Parvin stated,

*“my husband says that my prayer is for me and for my God why you regularly remind me of the beginning of the prayer? I cannot accept this. He has to pray on time. Many times, we fight over this issue but I believe that we have to pray on time.”*

They overemphasize on religion and morality in children education. In a way that they prioritize such issues over a good relationship with their children sepideh said, *“If my daughter does not observe veil correctly, I do not go outside with her. I tell her to dress an appropriate scarf and clean her makeup so I will come with you. My husband says this behavior of mine is not correct. But I think it is totally appropriate.”* About respecting the rights of others and justice they are

extremely sensitive so that their husband and children become tired and frustrated. Roya said,

*“I strongly emphasize on the respecting of the truth and justice. That's why for many years, I have been having problems with my husband and mother-in-law. My mother-in-law never cares justice between my husband and his brother. This kills me. When I protest, she says I'm wrong and it is not so. But this is really killing me. My husband says that I shall not interfere. He says this is a problem between him mother and his brother, but I cannot see so much injustice and keep silent.”*



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- Lack of self-compassion for involvement in the controlling and managing others permanently  
They are very busy because of permanent control of others so they have less compassion for their own. For example, life management, husband, and children are more important for them than exercise. They cannot trust doctors and medicines because of distrust schema. They do not go to the doctors until they are forced and even sometimes when they go they do not use the medicines. They trust their knowledge more than medical science. They are not playful because they think it is a waste of time and expense. Susan stated, *"I never spend my time on leisure. How much a person live as if give up work and life to look for ridiculous things?"*

### **3. Parenting difficulties**

Women with obsessive-compulsive character have problems in their parenting and maternal relationships. Their relationship is harmful with their children. Their training style is based on perfectionism. They have predestined centralized administrative system. They are controller, strict and cold mothers.

- Education based on perfectionism

Their training style is based on perfectionism. Their expectations of children are very high. They expect their children to be the best, politest, most obedient, and most studious. Roya said, *"From now on, I will tell my son, you should be first in the university entrance exam. No other place satisfies me, but the first place. I know I hit him, but I cannot think of any the other place for him."*

These expectations, that may sometimes be impossible to meet, make children feel defeated and dissatisfied and lose their self-esteem. These mothers are also very sensitive to their child's grades and it makes the children anxious. Sara stated,

*"I am very sensitive about my children's lessons and I am very serious about it. If they have bad handwriting on a paper, I tear it and ask them to rewrite from the beginning."*

Mothers with obsessive-compulsive personality are very strict in upbringing their children. They cannot accept their children's mistakes and want to correct all the mistakes. They want children making no mistakes. Otherwise they will be punished. Freshteh said,



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*"I am obsessed with the education of my children. If they utter any naughty words, I'd fill their mouths with pepper and if they are not allowed to wash their mouths. They must endure harsh pepper to learn not to speak badly."*

- Predestined centralized management system in maternal relationships

Obsessive-compulsive mothers are very strict and controlling. Their children are fully managed, as if they are play stones in their mothers' hands and what mothers say is unquestionable and must be obeyed. Ladan said,

*"education of my children is completely under my control and it just satisfies me. However, my husband's complaining and says that I am a commander and my kids are soldiers. But I think I should just breed them well and then let them out into the community. For example, when we go to a party, when they are asked to eat something, they first look at me in order for my approval. In case I nod my head, they take the thing; otherwise, they never do that, even if they yearn for the thing. I think it is very good and this way they are polite."*

They make children very dependent, so that kids do not have their own volition, cannot even make decisions without their mothers. The management system of the mother is in a way that she takes all the confidence from the child and any decision whereupon must be under her control.

As a result, even if the mothers are to allow them, they cannot decide and act. In this connection, Sara said, *"My daughter doesn't make decisions without me. Whatever she is about to do, it should be under my supervision. Even, her friends are selected by me. When we go to the restaurant, she asks me to order for her. I should choose her clothes, though I insist she chooses herself, but she says she has no idea."*

- The cold and rigid maternal relationships

People with obsessive character have troubles expressing their emotions and making warm and sincere relationships. Such a character affects their relationship with their children. These mothers have cold relationships with their children while the maternal relationship needs affection and feelings. Ladan said, *"I do not like my kids to be with me all the time. When they come to kiss me, I ignore them and tell them I don't like such sentimentalism."*

- Avoid children from mother



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The cold behavior of the mothers leads children to avoid their mothers. Children want warm relationship with their mothers, but when they see their mother's avoidance of these relationships, they get distance from them. Zahra said, *"My daughter tells me that she's always wanted me to hug her warmly and tightly and kiss me. But I never spoil her."* This behavior of the mothers is a clear and accessible pattern for the children and thus makes them incapable of expressing affection and intimate relationships. This behavior of the mother and her method of child upbringing makes an inner anger in the children from their mothers and blamed her for the poor upbringing. These kids have a yearning for love and warmth of the relationship with their mothers Setareh said,

*"My son says that I am always like a statue. You can just give us advice and training. We yearn for a warmth relationship and motherly love. We cannot have a good relationship with others and we have also become frozen and that is your fault. I will not forgive you for the way you trained me. I think my son is too much spoiled."*

#### **4. Relationship of difficulties with others**

Women with obsessive-compulsive personality have also problems in their social interactions, which have negative impact on their marital relations. In this context, job problems, excessive and mandatory adherence to social norms, avoidance of intimate relationships, avoidance of husband's family, ambivalence in relation to the main family were discovered.

##### **-Job problems**

Internal difficulties affect people's career and cause problems in this area that affect their marital relationship. For example, these women have extreme responsibility in their job. They are so conscientious and regulated. Parvin stated, *"I am a banker and a disciplined worker. Over the years, I never arrive late to work."* They do not have friendly relationship with their colleagues because they are so formal and have cold emotions. These formal relationships and extreme responsibility cause them to undertake most of the tasks in the work environment. As a result, they spend a lot of energy for their job so that they have no energy for their family. Also, they are very distracted by work problems so that they cannot control the stress of work and relate it to their marital relationships. All of these cases affect their marital relations and cause various dissatisfactions in marital relations. Shabnam stated,



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*"I am very sensitive on my work and I value my work very much, so I spend a lot of energy for it. Because I have relationship within a framework with my colleagues, I do not like to get them involved in my works so I do all of my tasks. When I arrive at home, I fall from exhaustion."*

They may value their work more than their marital life. Firoozeh stated,

*"My husband undertakes all of the house tasks. Even, he teaches the kids. I can just get to my work and lessons. Believe it or not, I have not cooked for two years. My husband does all the works but he gets tired and complains regularly. He said that if you value our life like your work and lessons' then our life would become much better."*

-Extreme adherence to laws and social norms

Extreme adherence to laws and social norms was seen in them, wherein for this problem, their marital relationship is diffculted. Firoozeh said,

*"I am so sensitive about my city environment. If someone throws rubbish, I get upset. I've already mentioned to my husband and children so that some time ago my husband got very angry and even emptied the recycle bin in the middle of park and said that I want to make everywhere dirty. Leave me alone. We were not on speaking terms for some days."*

If they do not observe the laws themselves, then they feel guilty. Lili stated,

*"The rules are so important for me. If I do not observe them then I feel so guilty so that I regularly ask my husband is he thinks I do very bad things. I asked so much that my husband gets frustrated and shouted at me. After that, I did not ask anymore. It was as if he should have shouted at me so I could stop."*

-Avoiding intimate relationships

Another feature of them is their avoiding of the intimate relationships. They cannot have deep friendly relationships with others because of mistrust schema. They prefer to have relations just to make a greeting. Sepideh said,

*"Even my children do not have the right to bring home their friends. I do not have any friends and I just have hello relations with neighbors. I do not trust the others to come and get to know my life."* Also, great attention to negative details in friendly relations and communicating with those they believe are in their social level prevents intimacy in their relationship. . Shahla stated, *"One of the reasons that I cannot commute with anyone is that I have high accuracy so that I see*





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*their behaviors and life. I feel they are not matching us. If one disrespects me I know instantly and I cannot communicate with that person anymore."*

Restrictions on social relations cause the marital relationships to become routine, this status increases the conflicts in relations and reduces the marital quality and satisfaction. Especially if these women's husbands have a personality who value for social communications and be interested to communicate with others then many conflicts arise in their marital relationships.

**-Avoidance of the husband's family**

These people only communicate with those who feel they are of the same level and this causes them sometimes consider their husband's family low-class and thus avoid any relationships with them. This makes the husband dissatisfied. Ava said, *"My two sister-in-laws made me vomit as their accent is very bad and rustic and all in all they belong to the low class society. I don't like to have relationships with them."*

They may also get very upset about their husband's family due to the perfectionist expectations that they have from their husband's family, and that these expectations are not met. Hence, they stop communicating with their husband's family. Firoozeh said, *"I want people to respect me and care about me. But my in-laws are not so. So I don't like communicate with them."* Another factor is their lack of flexibility in facing their in-laws' interference and also their inability to accept their excuse. This makes them avoid their in-laws. Firoozeh said, *"They did bother me and I tried to excuse them, but I never got clear about that. So I couldn't get along well with them anymore."* These women, in case communicate with their in-laws, are very cold and formal and that is because of their inner characteristics. Setareh said, *"They come over if I invite them and vice versa. I never like them to pop up in my house all of a sudden."* This avoidance of the women from their in-laws takes place while men like to commute to their original family. They want it to be done with their wives and in a warm and friendly manner. But these women avoid their in-laws and this leads to manifold problems in their marital life.

**- Ambivalence in relationships with the major family**

These women have a two-way relationship with their original family. They have a suppressed anger towards their parents because of their strictness and punishment, on the one hand, and have an excessive sense of anxious responsibility and anger towards them, on other hand. If they





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express their anger, the sense of responsibility, guilt and attachment hurt them. Therefore, these people experience the contradictory behaviors like their children. Sometimes they do not even believe that they have had such behavior. These thoughts, emotions, and behaviors affect their mental health and their marital relationships. Especially, due to this kind of wrath they have of their family, but for their adherence to them and their weakness in decision making, they always need their family for making decisions and this causes the husband to get frustrated and angry.

Ava stated,

*“I cannot say I have a good relationship with my mother, most of the time I am angry about her. That's because she compares me with others; that she did not let me to be on my own and grow. She grew me in a way that I cannot unfortunately make decisions without her. I cannot even buy a dress or choose clothes for the party. This is she who must give her opinion about the color of my clothes and shoes. I am upset about it but I have no idea what to do about it. Without her, I really don't know what to do.”*

### **4. Marital difficulties**

In this theme, we address the codes such as sexual neglect, distrust of husband and the possibility of marital infidelity because of marital burnout, reduction in the dynamics of communication, inefficiency in problem solving, perception of incompetence of husband particularly in financial matters, perceived lack of accountability of husband, psychological husband.

#### **- Sexual negligence**

One of the characteristics of these people is their sexual negligence. They control their feelings too much. These people suffer from frostbite feelings. They hide their emotions in themselves and escape from expressing them. This is while in the relationships, especially the sexual relationships demand a lot of affections and feelings. This captured hiding of the emotions and the control of them in women with obsessive-compulsive personality creates a cool sexual relationship. The interviews also showed that these women suffer from a sexual frigidity and have very little desire to this relationship. Shahla said,

*“I am cold and it hurts my husband. He says I should see a doctor. Whenever he asks for intercourse, I neglect it for various excuses and thus delay it. I've always done it because of him; otherwise, I did not want any intercourse.”*



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They are regularly concerned with the others' awareness during the intercourse so that they want to end the relation as soon as possible. Firoozeh stated, *"We've got a small house; I am always obsessed with the children to realize, so I am always anxious and I do not have any pleasure."* Lili stated, *"I have stress regularly to finish it and take a shower."* They have a series of irrational thoughts and beliefs about sexual intercourse that hurt them before, during, and after it. And it affects their relationship. Sara stated, *"Honestly, I do not like to have sex. I always think that it is an animal instinct and takes away a person from humanity."* They perceive the sexual relationship as a transaction-oriented relationship. For example, if the husband mistreats them or huff them, they avoid having sexual relations. Roya said, *"When I am not on speaking terms with him, I never let him to get close to me. I also say that because I am upset with you I do not want to have a relationship with you."*

-Distrust towards the husband and the possibility of the husband's infidelity because of marital burnout

Another issue here is the distrust towards the husband and the possibility of the husband's infidelity because of marital burnout. Generally, these women have a degree of cynicism and mistrust of others that go back to their childhood and in their families (it expresses the trauma back in original family issue). They have negative impacts on their couple relationship; so that they check the husband and his behaviors because of this distrust. Especially if the husband has already committed a mistake, they do not forget it even if it goes back many years in the past and they are regularly worried lest the previous betrayal to be repeated Shabnam said,

*"I keep wondering every time his phone rings. I must understand who it was; or, wherever he wants to go I need to know where he wants to go. Even when he tells me, I do not trust him. I think he is lying. My husband gets very angry and we scold so often."*

On the other hand, the possibility of man's desire to get out of the house and betray his wife increases, because of wife coldness and her oriented-control. The distrust of wife and the inability to forget the husband's possible mistakes, together with cold relationship, all increase the risk of the man betraying the woman and this increases the harmful behaviors and discussions.

- The reduction in the dynamics of the couple's communication.



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Women with obsessive personality traits have control-oriented behaviors. As they capture feelings and emotions inside themselves, they tend to control outside. They desire to control the etiquettes of husband, husband's family, husband's friends, his commutes, thoughts, beliefs that these behaviors cause the husband to feel captivated and this makes problems in marital relations. Zahra said,

*"I am always anxious and remind my husband not to say things in front of others. I tell him do not behave like that in a party; or even do not laugh here or glower there. He gets upset but it is not under my control. I am always worried lest anything wrong happens."*

Their management system is predestined and centralized and is from up to bottom. They act as a boss and consider her husband as a subordinate. Sahar stated, *"My husband says that we are not enjoying even in a journey because we should go wherever you say as if I do not have any will of my own. I should always obey you."*

They blame their husbands too. They overstate their mistakes and blame them for it. They have poor perception of their husband in responsibilities and tasks and mention them. Ava stated,

*"My husband is very incapable. I always tell him that why you are so awkward that you cannot even cash a check."*

They consider their husbands as weak and incapable and thus consider this as a fact. They repeat it to their husband and to others. Zahra stated, *"this is a fact that if I do not stay with him, he cannot pull up his pants. He'll be destroyed without me."*

These women are emotionally very cold. They capture their feelings in themselves, which causes a mechanical and senseless relationship between the couples. Roya stated, *"It is the way I am. I do not express emotions. I do not say that I have not emotions but I hate to express them."* They are unable to express feelings and want to tell their husband they are needless of him and can live independently. Fereshteh stated, *"I behave in a manner that he knows I am independent. He knows I don't need him. I just put it into his brain."*

-Inefficiencies in problem solving

These people avoid and withdraw at the time of problems. They cannot solve the problem sufficiently. They quit their responsibilities and duties at the time of fight. Firoozeh stated,



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*“First, I wrangle at the time of conflict then I get angry at him. Almost time reduces the problems but I cannot talk about that or solve it.”*

In addition, they may resort to others for resolving the problem. They may go to the fortune tellers. Ladan stated, *“sometimes I get totally confused and don’t know what to do. I go to the fortuneteller. He tells me something and I get relaxed.”* These people do not admit their mistakes and at these times, they have aggressive and confrontational reactions, and are very vengeful. Shahla stated, *“I shout when I get angry and say whatever I want. Sometimes I throw and break the things. I cannot tolerate.”* They are also unable to forget the past issues and even remember the bitter events that occurred many years past and thus react for retaliation. They never get relaxed up until the time they retaliate their husband wrong action. Zahra stated, *“I cannot forget his wrong actions. I even remember fights that we had few year in the past so I want to retaliate.”*

-Perception of the incompetency of their husband especially in economic issues

These women perceive their husbands as incompetent especially in the economic issues and are dissatisfied with their husbands’ economic management. They believe that they are better than their husband in economic management. These perceptions cause them to be economically independent of their husband. Shahla stated, *“All of my husband’s income is in my hands and he gets money from me whenever he wants.”* Also, they hide their assets from their husband because of his incompetency and mistrust of others. Sara stated, *“I do not trust him in the financial fields and will not let to know my bank account.”*

-Perception of poor responsibility in husbands

They perceive that their husbands are irresponsible individuals. Therefore, they take responsibility of affairs and this makes them to become independent. Shahla stated, *“He cannot take the responsibility of life and put all of the decisions on me.”* This process pushes the man into the margins and the woman takes all the responsibilities and thus she becomes frustrated and tired. Women mostly express their dissatisfaction after a while, but men cannot or do not accept to shoulder any responsibility. Soosan stated, *“he takes part in no jobs or household chores. It seems he is not part of the family. He has never taken me to a doctor when I am sick or even ask*



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*for my feelings. Whenever I complain, he says you know all the system inside out. If you need, you'd go to the doctor and do whatever is needed. Why should I interfere?"*

-Psychological abuse of the husband

Women with obsessive-compulsive personality who pay extreme attention to the details bother themselves and those around them, especially the husband. Shabnam stated, *"My husband says that I pay attention to every little thing and pick on it. He's very upset and says most of our fights happen because of this attention of mine to the details."*

This precision and attention to the details make them not ignore most of the small issues and, therefore, it ends up bothering them and it becomes part of their marital relationship. These women are not also into recreation and hobbies and believe it as a waste of time. In recreations, they feel unhappy and after that they feel guilty conscience. Firrozeh stated,

*"I believe I should make use of every moment of my life. That's why I never like recreations, picnic, trips, and watching TV. Most of the times, I try not to take part in such activities and in case my husband takes me into such places by insisting, I take a book with me. It upsets my husband. He says that I am not into hobbies and enjoyment. He say that I always want to do something useful. Just cut it out and let's have fun, but I tell him I cannot. Even when I watch TV with him in a while, I feel guilty and just reproach myself for wasting my time."*

Perfectionism on tasks and roles are, as well, other items that have a detrimental effect on their marital relationship. Lili stated,

*"I either do not do a job, or I do it perfectly. For example, I do not clean my house for a long time, but when I want to do it, I clean it perfectly. Or, I don't make food for someday and one day I make different dishes. My husband gets very angry. He tells me that this way I ruin the life and make myself tired."*

Women with obsessive-compulsive personality pay extreme attention to the time and planning, and this bothers their husbands. So they feel they live in a military barracks. Soosan stated,

*"I am very obsessed with time and planning. For example, if I am supposed to go to a party at 8, I shouldn't be there even five minutes after eight. It gets on my nerves and shatters my plans. Then my husband say that he thinks he is living in a military camp as everything must be on time and everything must be done at the fixed hours and minutes."*



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Inability to make decisions has also devastating impact on couples' relationship. These people are not able to make decisions in the short time and, in the long term, they are skeptical about the decisions they had made. They sometimes face problems in doing small tasks such as shopping. They change the product for several times and still do not feel satisfied about it. This indecision causes them to feel confused and put people around them in trouble, especially their husbands. Freshteh stated, *"One of the problems in my life is decision making. I cannot decide. I make many decisions and change them finally. Most of the time it ends in quarrels with my husband but I do not know what to do."*

These woman's expectations from their husbands are enormous that emanate from their perfectionism. Shahla stated, *"I always expect my husband to know my expectations and know how make me happy. If I tell him, it has no favor in it. He should perceive himself."* Or, they are very serious about buying gifts. They must buy the best thing, from the best shops, with the best brands. Otherwise, this gift cannot be valued. Firoozeh stated, *"After we got married, he bought me gifts, but as I told him repeatedly that his shopping was a rip off, he wouldn't buy things alone since after."* All these issues make the marital relationships encounters problems.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The present study was aimed at analyzing difficulties in family lives of women with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. The study was used qualitative research and the thematic analysis technique for analyzing qualitative data. The extracted themes were developmental, intrapersonal, communication-with-husband, communication-with-children, communication-with-others difficulties. Developmental difficulties are factors affecting childhood such as family and damaging environments which lead to the development of schemas such as perfectionism, rigidity, and inflexibility as well as other symptoms of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. Mostly, one of the parents or both have suffered from this disorder. This issue causes their specific and rigid child rearing methods. Thus, if their children do not observe their principles, they will be severely punished.

In a study Laksman (2008), this issue has been investigated that parental styles related to this disorder are rigidity, autonomy, perfectionism, and controlling styles. It seems that those individuals have had a lot of responsibilities for their behaviors in their childhood. Parents of





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those individuals considered love and acceptance as rewards for superior performances. Parental constructions such as “you should do this” or “you should be better than this” caused that children thought about perfectionism. They thought that if they exerted more efforts, or if they did jobs better, their parents would love them (Laksman, 2008). This behavioral pattern may grow particularly in the society. Attributes such as having suitable activities, punctuality, tendency towards hardworking, and attentions to details are values which are the necessary conditions for communities and having efficient economy. Self-regulation of such personalities are encouraged by a lot of modern communities (Millon, Millon, Meagher, Grossman, & Ramnath, 2012). The environment in which there are rigid and inflexible rules, the occurrence and continuity of symptoms of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder are inevitable. In such an environment, individuals become perfectionist, rigid, and inflexible and their focuses are radically on orders, time, and rules. The present study indicated that developmental difficulties produce intrapersonal difficulties. Intrapersonal difficulties such as radical accountability and perfectionism, moralization, radical religiosity, and the lack of kindness because of concerns in consistently controlling and managing others damage women’s behaviors in fields of relationships with children, husbands, and others. The present study indicated that behaviors such as stinginess and inability to discard useless personal items lead to creating dissatisfaction in those individuals’ lives (Fossati et al., 2006); (Hummelen, Wilberg, Pedersen, & Karterud, 2008); (Seedat & Stein, 2002). Findings of the present study showed that women with symptoms of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder have difficulties relationships with their children. They have too many expectations from their children to do activities beyond their abilities. This issue results in damaging the children’s self-esteem and self-confidence because mostly they feel defeated and never experience self-satisfaction. Moreover, because of their rigidity and inflexibility, they do not accept their errors and mistakes. They also cannot forgive their children and severely punish them. They are highly controlling mothers who make their children highly dependent to themselves. They have cold relationships, while motherly relationships need expressing emotions and affects. These conditions lead to their children’s avoidance, coldness of the family environment, and difficulties of family relations. (Laulik, Chou, Browne, & Allam, 2013), indicated that personality disorder is a ranger for creating other disorders in parental



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relationships and parenting methods. (Wilson & Durbin, 2012), found out that individuals with personality disorder have problems in making parental relationships. Some abnormal parental behaviors exist in all personality disorder, but some others are specific to a particular disorder. For example, parents with Narcissistic paranoid, and obsessive personality disorders exert more efforts to influence their children. In fact, each of parents influence their children with different motivations. For example, narcissistic parents influence their children with expecting their children for compatibility, while parents with obsessive personality influence them because of their preoccupation with order and control. (Johnson, Cohen, Kasen, Ehrensaft, & Crawford, 2006), indicated that parents' gender has correlation with personality disorder as a moderator in their parental relationships. (Rasbash, Jenkins, O'Connor, Tackett, & Reiss, 2011), indicated that expressing negative behaviors with children appear more in mothers than in fathers. Traits of obsessive personality is effective on these women's relationships with others. Those traits difficulties their family relationships. These women avoid intimate and friendly relationships because of anxiety and lack of trust in others. Restrictions in their social relations cause that family relationships more rapidly approach to everydayness, increase contradictions, and reduce quality and satisfaction, particularly when husbands have personality interested in social communications, their relationships face abundant contradictions. The women only visit those people whom they consider to be at the same social status with themselves; thus sometimes they score the social status of their husbands' family and do not tend to have any relationship with them. They also cause their husbands' dissatisfaction by strict rules and cold treatments. They are inflexible towards behaviors and interferences of their husbands' families and cannot forgive their mistakes. This matter leads to their avoidance from their husbands' families, but husbands need intimate relationships with their families wssssith their wives without strict rules. This issue may result in occurrence of conflicts between husbands and wives. The women always need their families for decision making because of their severed dependency on them. They cannot decide without counseling their families, which leads to their husbands' dissatisfaction. The research conducted by (Stroud, Durbin, Saigal, & Knobloch-Fedders, 2010), indicated that particular traits of abnormal personality and symptoms of personality disorder affect interpersonal relationships .





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Traits of women with obsessive personality can damage their relationships in different fields such as their marital relationships. For example, from among traits of obsessive personality is procrastination in sexual relationships because these women avoid expressing their emotions, while relationships, specifically sexual relationships, needs to express emotions. As a result, their sexual relationship become something mechanical. Their illogical thoughts and beliefs about sexual relations in before, during, or after their relationships. Having sex is one of the very important elements in a marital relationship and a determining issue in satisfaction and quality of marital relationships. Husbands of these women are mostly dissatisfied with having sex with their wives. This issue can severely damage their marital relationships. These women are very controlling and tend to control different aspects of their husbands' lives. These behaviors cause that husbands feel captivity which causes disruption in marital relationships.

It seems that a centrally compulsive and up-down management system shapes the home environment in which the system does not delegate authorities to their husbands; thus no relationship is made. This relationship is in fact in the head-and-subjects form. Women with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder blame their husbands very much. They consider their husbands useless and take them as persons who cannot take responsibilities and do activities appropriately. They repeatedly warn their husbands regarding these problems. This is while men like to be seen more powerful and authoritative. As discussed, these women captivate their own feelings. This issue resulted in the creation of emotionless and mechanical relationships between couples. They are inefficient to solve problems in case of occurrence of problems, they miff. They avoid their responsibilities during disputes. Their marital lives are full of challenges and problems which are need to be solve, but these women's inefficiency to solve them results in creating conflicts and reducing marital satisfaction. They consider their husbands irresponsible; therefore, they take the responsibility of affairs themselves. This issue gradually causes that husbands' responsibilities be put on wives' shoulders; therefore, they will get bored and distressed. In this stage, women mostly feel a sense of dissatisfaction, but men do not accept or are not able to take the responsibilities anymore. Obsession in women with compulsive personality disorder results in their husbands' mental abuse.



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Since one of the most important reasons of contradictions, i.e. beliefs, are illogical and deviated in them (Karney & Bradbury, 1997); (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000), couples' neuroticism may lead them towards illogical beliefs and reduce their abilities for coping with mental pressures (Caughlin et al., 2000). Accordingly, it can reduce the quality of relationships and increase contradictions. These women's radical attentions to details result in troubles for themselves and other people. This troubles can penetrate their own marital relationships. In addition, these women are not accustomed to recreation and fun and think that those activities waste their time and energy. They are anxious in recreations and feel guilty after them. This issue causes that their husbands recreate lonely or with their friends. These women mostly pay attention to some limited aspects such as work, aims, values, money, or society, while they do not pay attention on other aspects particularly play or love. This matter leads to difficulties to their marital relationships. They have perfectionism, unattainable goals, too expectations from themselves and others. Because they cannot attain their goals and their expectations are not fulfilled, they become depressed and disappointed. They sometimes lose their ability to attain their goals. Depression can affect their relationships particularly marital ones and resulted in conflicts and contradictions in their marital lives. (Hart, Dutton, & Newlove, 1993), (Karney & Bradbury, 1997), (Caughlin et al., 2000), (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000), (Donnellan, Conger, & Bryant, 2004), indicated that neuroticism and depression have significant roles in conflicts between couples, while depression is highly prevalent among individuals with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder particularly in their midlife and old age. Women with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder are radically dependent on discipline and planning which causes harassment of husbands in such a way that they feel that they are in a garrison. Indecisiveness has also negative effects on their relationships. These women are unable in making decisions in short-term period. They also regularly have doubts in their decisions made in the long term. Indecisiveness leads to their distress and that of their relatives particularly their husbands. Observations and interviews indicated that symptoms of obsessive personality disorder affect women's family relationships. Previous studies confirms the results of the present study. For example, (Hajloo, Sobhi-Garamaleki, & Baqeri, 2012), found out that perfectionism, having inefficient and illogical thoughts of responsibilities, doing affairs perfectly, having rigid



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criteria in doing tasks, and not accepting any reason for less doing them, critically evaluating themselves and others, having a set of self-defeating thoughts result in increasing stress, decreasing self-esteem, being dissatisfied with life, and reducing couples' quality of life. (Bouchard, Lussier, & Sabourin, 1999), believe that neuroticism affects both spouses' understanding and negative emotions caused by those characteristics. (Caughlin et al., 2000), conducted a 13 year study and concluded that there is a high correlation between neuroticism and marital satisfaction related to negative communication patterns between spouses. It means that neurotic persons express more negative emotions to their spouses. This issue results in the formation of negative interactive patterns in marital relationships. (Donnellan et al., 2004), founded out that neuroticism has positive correlation with negative interactions of couples. The results of, (Decuyper, Gistelinck, Vergauwe, Pancorbo, & De Fruyt, 2016), indicated that the existence of incompatible personality traits result in dissatisfaction in romantic relationships. Therefore, exploring and identifying these difficulties can provide expansive research domains for reducing difficulties existing in family relationships of the women.

In general, observations and interviews indicated that there are five interactive themes in in lives of the study women with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. Their interactions are in such a way that developmental difficulties cause the development and reinforcement of intrapersonal difficulties and the formation of obsessive-compulsive personality. Development of these traits in women leads to communication difficulties with husbands, others, and children. Furthermore, difficulties of communication with other and with children result in increasing difficulties in relationship with husbands. Therefore, exploring and identifying those difficulties can provide extensive areas of research for reducing difficulties existing in those women's family relationships, particularly their marital relationships. In addition, using the results of the present study can be effective on prevention-based approaches (premarital counseling and marital enrichment).

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